

CHAPTER VIII.

FOOD.

Diet—Kātu—Badaga and Kola Neighbours prey on the Todas—Todas give away valuable Property—Not flesh eaters—Ceremony of eating Buffalo flesh—Don't drink Spirits—Children's Food—Family Meals—Grace before Meat—No Weapons of the Chase—No variety of Live Stock.

CHAP.
VIII.

THE Todas have no sports or games, except the innocent tip cat, corresponding in its play very much with our boys' game of rounders. No violent exercise. No means of settling disputes by scientific personal conflict, as in wrestling, fencing or boxing. Nothing in fact pointing to natural turbulence of character and surplus energy. They wear no weapons of offence or defence. They do not even hunt, either, for the sake of providing themselves with food, or for the pleasure of the chase.

241 They do not attempt to till the ground.

234 The products of the buffalo form the main staple of Toda
262 diet. No doubt, at some time or another, they depended upon
177 that animal more than they do now; in a period when they
262 were isolated from contact with agricultural races. Now they
437 are well supplied with the ordinary cereals of the country, as
439 rice, wheat, barley, varieties of the pea, millet and other
427 small grain, also sugar, salt, and tobacco; all of which items
are, and for many generations have been, either purchased
from the surrounding tribes by the barter or sale of their own
surplus nei, or obtained by the levy from their neighbours,

research has disproved the formerly accepted theory that the languages of Southern India, viz., Telinga, Carnataca, Tamul, and Malayalim, were corrupt derivatives of Sanskrit, and it is believed that the few Sanskrit words which occur in the Toda tongue have merely been engrafted on it. 197

With reference to the Tamul, a partial similarity, or even identity, in the vocabulary of any language might arise simply from lengthened local proximity, and is only considered by philologists as of any value when it occurs in what are supposed to be the most ancient words; namely, those which pertain to everyday life, such as no nation, even its most primitive state, could be without, and which would be the least likely to be exchanged for foreign words. As to the resemblance in grammatical construction, which is said to consist in some plurals and in the terminations of certain verbs, an oral language so difficult of pronunciation will naturally demand a great amount of careful study and an intimate acquaintance, in order to determine with certainty the value of this affinity. Moreover, supposing it to be established, it appears to be a question whether the Tamul might not owe its root to the aboriginal Toda, instead of *vice versa*.

In mental constitution the Toda is intelligent and thoughtful; although naturally indolent, capable of being roused to considerable exertion on occasions of necessity; and, notwithstanding his singularly peaceful disposition, and total want of weapons, is inherently brave and bold. It has been said that he is too lazy to hunt the wild game, large or small, which abounds on every side; but it must be remembered that he does not eat flesh. Possessing no implements of agriculture, he consequently does not till the ground, but the grain which he uses is supplied by his vassals as a *quid pro quo*, in which respect he differs little from the wealthy classes in more civilised countries. The very use of grain at all by the Todas is probably an innovation of recent date. That physical courage is not wanting in an average Toda may be inferred from the bloody funeral customs which, as will be presently described, prevail in his country. His moral fearlessness of character, with its accompanying consciousness of power, are felt and acknowledged by all the other tribes, who involuntarily bow to an influence they can neither cope with nor emulate. His contempt of danger is also exhibited in his carrying no weapon of defence against the numerous cheetahs, black panthers, bears, wild dogs, and tigers. 157 262 241 181

TODA

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648 others who had been employed, not with conspicuous
 464 success, on planters' estates. The Todas consider it
 461 beneath their dignity to cultivate land. A former
 [241] Collector of the Nilgiris granted them some acres of
 land for the cultivation of potatoes, but they leased the
 land to the Badagas, and the privilege was cancelled.
 In connection with the Todas' objection to work, it is
 recorded that when, on one occasion, a mistake about
 the ownership of some buffaloes committed an old Toda
 to jail, it was found impossible to induce him to work
 with the convicts, and the authorities, unwilling to resort
 to hard remedies, were compelled to save appearances
 by making him an overseer. The daily life of a Toda
 562 woman has been summed up as lounging about the mad
 512 or mand (Toda settlement), buttering and curling her
 hair, and cooking. The women have been described
 [157] as free from the ungracious and menial-like timidity of
 [77] the generality of the sex in the plains. When Europeans
 (who are greeted as swāmi or god) come to a mand,
 177 the women crawl out of their huts, and chant a monoto-
 609 nous song, all the time clamouring for tips (inām). Even
 [735] the children are so trained that they clamour for money
 till it is forthcoming. As a rule, the Todas have no
 objection to Europeans entering into their huts, but on
 more than one occasion I have been politely asked to
 take my boots off before crawling in on the stomach, so
 as not to desecrate the dwelling-place. Writing in 1868,
 114 Dr. J. Shortt makes a sweeping statement that "most
 177 of the women have been debauched by Europeans, who,
 164 it is sad to observe, have introduced diseases to which
 these innocent tribes were once strangers, and which are
 slowly but no less surely sapping their once hardy and
 vigorous constitutions. The effects of intemperance and
 disease (syphilis) combined are becoming more and more

797 have had as its immediate incentive an incident in which a Toda man who was ill was given medicine by a Tamilian Christian and told to pray at the Tamil Church in Ootacamund. He seems to have interpreted this as a vow to a god, such vows being freely undertaken by the Todas,² and on recovery he went to the church to do whatever rites were customary. The missionaries regarded this as a direct call to undertake mission work with the tribe and Miss Ling was appointed to be in charge. In 1904 the first convert was baptized, [kišker] (59, Kishkar),³ his own name being used as a baptismal name along with Paramajyoti, a Sanskritic name of the Tamil and Tamil Christian type. This man was appointed a catechist to preach to the Todas and still acts as such. In 1907 the next converts, five young women, were baptized. Preaching and teaching were carried on from the beginning in the face of recurrent opposition from the tribe, although much of the teaching was only indirectly religious. When converts were made, economic difficulties arose since these persons were cut off from the tribal life, both by the tribe and also, though reluctantly, by the missionaries, whose aspiration had been to convert the tribe as a whole and retain the old economic structure while doing away with the religious and the more un-Christian social features of the tribal culture (such, e.g., as polyandry, the low status of women, etc.) and adding agriculture to the pastoral regime. The difficulty was met by getting permission to use some of the abandoned Toda village and dairy sites and pasturages; on two of these the converts were settled and agriculture was joined to the care of cattle in providing a living for them. At both places a church was built, the more important having a turret and bell provided by the converts themselves, which Miss Ling, probably correctly, regards as an equivalent in the life of the Toda Christians to the sacred bells of the tribal dairies. Houses for the people, schools, and medical dispensaries complete the material side of the mission colonies. The number of converts has varied. Many Todas at various periods have undergone religious instruction preliminary to baptism without being able to take the final step. At present the number of persons living at the two colonies is

² See my paper *Toda Culture Thirty-five Years after* (Annals Bhandarkar Oriental Research Institute 19. 101-121), 117.

³ When a Toda is mentioned, he is placed with reference to the genealogical tables in W. H. R. Rivers, *The Todas* (London, Macmillan and Co., 1906), by the number of the table in which his name occurs and the spelling there given. The writing of Toda words in this paper is strictly phonemic. The phonetic characters used are in general those of the IPA. Small capitals represent retroflex consonants, except that [ʂ] is used for the sibilant. Italics represent alveolars, [r] being an alveolar trill. [r̥] is a post-dental one-flap tremulant. [ʂ] represents the abnormal sibilant (almost like English sh). [c] and [ɟ] are affricates of *ts* and *ds* type respectively. [o] is a mid, mixed, rounded vowel, [u] high, back, unrounded. When two vowel characters are juxtaposed, they together represent a diphthongal phoneme; [au:] in one name is the diphthong [au:] plus the vowel [i].

THE CHRISTIAN TODAS

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about 50, including some wives who were Tamilian by origin, and all the children.* In 1932 Miss Ling returned to England after fifty years of missionary life. The Toda Christians who had turned to her for settlement of all their difficulties now found themselves without strong and sympathetic guidance, and dissatisfaction with those who succeeded her and quarrels among themselves, as well as difficulty in meeting their financial obligations to the mission and to Miss Ling herself, who had aided them with large loans from her own means, produced in the community what may only be regarded as disintegration. In 1938 Miss Ling felt compelled to return to India and her influence had already begun to heal the breaches before I lost contact with the community.

A few of the men have taken to other economic pursuits than agriculture. One is a chauffeur, one a policeman, another was apprenticed to a tailor. [kuarom] (34, Kwodron) showed promise in school and later studied at the Madras Christian College in Madras, where he learned English with remarkable correctness and fluency (he was my best interpreter). He was employed as a clerk in various government offices in Ootacamund but got into financial difficulties of a somewhat disreputable sort, and finally to extricate himself became a convert to the Seventh Day Adventist Mission. [kanfuzodj] (14, Kunpuradi) has been a chauffeur but is now an agriculturalist. His English is rather defective, but he made a remarkably good interpreter and informant in investigations into ethnological matters, since his interest in tribal affairs is intense, and in the song-technique of the Todas, with which he is thoroughly familiar, being himself the quasi-official composer of the Toda Christians. Most of the members of the community work industriously at their agricultural life and, since the Nilgiris specialize in growing potatoes for the markets in the plains and as far north as Bombay, economic life is fairly secure and permits a standard which is in many ways higher than that of the tribe and than that of many other Christian communities of South India. The women continue to do Toda embroidery for sale through the mission.¹

Economically, the Christian community has had to separate itself from the tribe. One link however remains. The pastures of the Christians become poor seasonally and at such times cattle which are not giving milk are often pastured with the tribe's herds in the dry-weather pastures. The man to whom such cattle are entrusted is recompensed with a small fee. Frequently the same course is adopted with young

* This figure is only a guess and probably a slight overestimate. The census figure of 597 for the Todas in the year 1931 included 27 Christian Todas, according to the enumerators, although the mission claimed 37. The Christian community has undoubtedly grown since then by the addition of converts and of births.

¹ See my paper *Toda Garments and Embroidery*, JACS 57. 277-289.

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Toda culture thirty-five years after

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the impression is gained that if Government did not keep a close watch on Toda land, either from a concern for Toda welfare or from a desire to preserve the amenities of the Nilgiris, and prevent the free play of economic pressure, the pastures would soon all be alienated, or at any rate to such an extent that the economic life of the Todas would be severely prejudiced. Toda economic life is to this important extent artificially hedged off from the interference of outside influences and preserved from total disruption. Sir Athelstane Baines' remark that the Todas are "stalled aborigines" is in this respect entirely justified.¹

The Toda Amelioration Scheme was mentioned above in connexion with the payment of Toda debts. The other chief feature of the plan was to induce the Todas to grow potatoes and to work this agricultural enterprise and the sale of their ghee through two cooperative societies. The advantages of the Scheme appealed to a number of the chief men, and some of the superficial benefits made a remarkable appeal to less responsible Todas as a method of getting something for nothing. The scheme broke down on its really vulnerable point. The Todas are pastoralists with no tradition of agriculture and the continuous back-breaking labor it demands, and the attempt to make agriculturalists of them while their own pastoral occupation was still in full working order could not with any confidence have been expected to succeed.² Those few who personally engaged themselves in the work found that it went so against their habits that two years of it were more than enough. The majority merely hired outsiders to do the manual labor for them, or sold the seed-potatoes and tools that were advanced to them by the societies. No trace of the Scheme now remains.

Casual employment as beaters for English sportsmen brings in a small, irregular income to a few Todas. The Maharaja of Mysore each year engages fifteen men of the tribe to act as an ornamental bodyguard at his palace in Ootacamund. Some few

¹ Sir Athelstane Baines *Ethnography (Castes and Tribes.)* [Grundriss der Indo-arischen Philologie und Altertumskunde II, 5], 125.

² See also the Census officer in 1931 (reference in note 1) for the same judgment on the scheme.

776 Then come two important demi-gods: a) *Kwotèn*, a man-god whose fabulous life is closely associated with one of the Toda clans (that of Pan); Rivers believed him to have been an outstanding Toda personality who was possibly posthumously deified. b) *Kwoto*, another man-god; he is closely associated with the clan of Melgarsh; among the legendary feats which he is reputed to have accomplished is that of tying down the sun between two mountains and of taking it to drink at a stream every day, in order to prove to the gods, who had challenged him, that he possessed supernatural powers.

197 The language spoken by the Todas is a Dravidian dialect. According to Emeneau, it is more akin to Canarese (Kanada) than to Tamil, although it cannot be said to be a very close relative of the former either. All Todas are, anyhow, bilingual, and very often even trilingual, conversing freely in Badaga with their neighbours and in Tamil with visitors from the plains. As they have no script of their own, 212 when they occasionally want to write something (such as commemorative inscriptions on temple doors) they make use of Tamil characters. 177 I have never seen them use Roman letters, but I have been told (by Miss C. F. Ling for instance) that although not habitual, this is sometimes also done.

234 The economy of the Todas is a pastoral one, large herds of great 433 horned buffaloes, which do not resemble those of the plains, being kept for their milk and milk products. Many of these animals are quite ordinary (*putir*) but the great majority of them are pedigree cattle [778] of a sacred nature (*postir*), their ancestry being calculated through the cows. They are believed to have been given to the tribe by the gods. They are grouped in four principal categories, each graded hierarchically. Thus the lowest category is that of the *wursulir*, then come the [778] *nodrovair* and the *Kugvalir*, and finally, the highest and most sacred of all, the *tiir*.

[648] Like other pastoral people, the Todas consider it degrading to take to agriculture, and repeated attempts by the Indian Government to [241] induce them to till the soil have miserably failed. When given a field to cultivate, they usually let it out to a Badaga for a nominal sum, [427] preferring to carry on with their animal husbandry and its semi-nomadic form of life, a tradition deeply ingrained in them and to which they are greatly attached. Most of the milk, butter and buttermilk [439] produced by the tribe is consumed by its members, but a certain amount is sold in the local market, and the money thus earned made use of to 433 buy other foods and everyday commodities: On the whole, the Toda 511